



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

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New York State Parks Announces \$1 Million Project to Prevent Wildfire Spread in Napeague and Hither Hills State Parks

*Project will install fuel breaks to address damage to pitch pine forest
from invasive species*

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYS OPRHP) will begin a \$1 million project to install fuel breaks to prevent the spread of potential wildfire at Napeague and Hither Hills State Parks in Suffolk County. The State Parks contractor will begin mobilization this week and start the work shortly. The project will help address increased wildfire risks resulting from the mass decline and death of pitch pine trees damaged in a recent outbreak of the invasive insect, the Southern Pine Beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*).

“The dead trees and woody debris from the Southern Pine Beetle infestation has unfortunately increased the amount of fuel in the system and has potentially decreased access for responders in the event of a wildfire,” **Long Island State Parks Regional Director George Gorman said**. “Out of extreme caution, this project will install a series of fuel breaks to provide emergency responders quicker access to difficult terrain to fight a wildfire, should one occur.”

New York State Senator Anthony Palumbo said, “I commend the leadership at the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for taking

preemptive measures to limit our region's exposure to wildfires, helping combat conflagrations and adding safeguards to protect our historic forests. Forest management is our best weapon to prevent forest fires and protect the health and safety of our residents. I applaud the Department for taking these preventive measures.”

Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. said, “Preserving our parks isn't just about landscapes; it's about safeguarding against threats. With a million-dollar initiative, New York State Parks takes a vital step in protecting against wildfire risks, ensuring safety, and preserving precious habitats. I am pleased by this thoughtful and strategic effort towards conservation in the face of challenges.”

Beginning in December 2023, work crews begin removing all woody vegetation within seven separate fuel breaks, totaling approximately 12,000 linear feet at up to 25 feet wide. Work crews will be using forestry mulchers, chainsaws, chippers, and other heavy equipment. The fuel breaks will be installed only on State Park property where the pitch pine systems are adjacent to private residences. The work will be completed at the following locations:

- Cranberry Hole Road – Approximately 5,550 feet of fuel breaks will be installed behind residences on the east side of Cranberry Hole Road.
- Dunes Lane – Approximately 550 feet of fuel breaks will be installed around 8 Dunes Lane.
- Dunes Lane – All vegetation within 10 feet of Dunes Lane will be removed.
- Bay View Ave – Approximately 1,750 feet of fuel breaks will be installed behind residences on the southwest side of Bay View Ave.
- Marlin Drive – All vegetation within 10 feet of the west side of Marlin Drive will be removed.
- Ship Wreck Drive – Approximately 440 feet of fuel breaks will be installed behind 9 Ship Wreck Drive.
- Napeague Harbor Road – Approximately 740 feet of fuel breaks will be installed just north of 90 Napeague Harbor Road.

The project is being conducted in conjunction with a wider effort by NYS Department of Transportation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and NYS OPRHP to mitigate potential hazards associated with the dead and dying trees within the area.

The parks are home to approximately 671 acres of Maritime Pitch Pine Dune Woodland.. Additionally, the recently listed State and Federally endangered Northern Long-eared Bat is present in both parks.

NYSOPRHP has been working closely with U.S. Fish & Wildlife and DEC to ensure impacts to the federally and state endangered Northern long-eared bat will be

limited and stay in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Any necessary tree cutting will occur before February 28, 2024 while the bats are hibernating in their overwintering roosts off-site. Additional work in the future will be part of the long-term effort to manage the impacts of Southern Pine Beetle and restore the natural communities within the parks.

To learn more about Southern Pine Beetle: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/southern-pine-beetle>

To learn more about Northern long-eared bat: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/northern-long-eared-bat>

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation oversees more than 250 parks, historic sites, recreational trails, golf courses, boat launches and more, which saw a record 79.5 million visits in 2022. For more information on any of these recreation areas, visit parks.ny.gov, download the free [NY State Parks Explorer mobile app](#) or call 518.474.0456. Join us in celebrating our Centennial throughout 2024, and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and the [OPRHP Blog](#).

[Hither Hills Overview.jpg](#)
[Napeague Overview.jpg](#)
